

Claims

Having thus described the invention, what is claimed as new and desired to be secured by Letters Patent is as follows:

1 1. A method for electronically redeeming consumer-
2 selected coupons, comprising:

3 electronically storing coupon data on a portable coupon
4 card, said coupon data including a plurality of coupons
5 selected by a consumer, an expiration date for
6 redemption of said consumer-selected coupons, a
7 plurality of redemption numbers representing the number
8 of times respective consumer-selected coupons may be
9 redeemed prior to said expiration date;
10 providing said portable coupon card to said consumer;
11 electronically scanning a bar code associated with a
12 product selected by said consumer to derive a price and
13 inventory information related to said product;
14 electronically scanning said portable coupon card of said
15 consumer so as to read said coupon data stored thereon;
16 reducing said price associated with said selected product
17 based on said coupon data stored on said portable
18 coupon card.

1 2. The method as in claim 1 wherein said plurality of
2 consumer-selected coupons are selected from an on-line library
3 of available coupons.

1 3. The method as in claim 2 wherein reducing said price
2 includes reducing said price if a respective redemption number
3 is greater than zero and said predetermined expiration date is
4 later than a present date.

1 4. The method as in claim 1 wherein providing said
2 portable coupon card to said consumer includes dispensing said
3 portable coupon card from a point-of-purchase machine.

0 1 5. The method as in claim 1 wherein providing said
2 portable coupon card to said consumer includes mailing said
3 portable coupon card to said consumer.

1 6. The method as in claim 1 further comprising
2 establishing a connection utilizing a computer network between
3 a remote computer of a consumer and a host computer for
4 electronically selecting coupon data offered at said host
5 computer.

1 7. The method as in claim 1 further comprising
2 receiving a payment from said consumer for said portable coupon
3 card following the step of storing said consumer-selected
4 coupon data thereon.

1 8. A coupon processing system, comprising:

2 a first database of coupon card accounts associated with a
3 plurality of portable coupon cards, each account
4 including a personal identification number associated
5 with a particular consumer, data representing a
6 plurality of consumer-selected coupons, an expiration
7 date for redemption of said consumer-selected coupons,
8 a plurality of redemption numbers representing the
9 number of times respective coupons may be redeemed
10 prior to said expiration date, and a consumer-selected
11 vendor name;

12 means for storing respective account data on a respective
13 portable coupon card;

14 a host computer connected to said first database and
15 connected to a computer network;

16 a vendor computer connected to said computer network and
17 adapted to communicate with said host computer for
18 receiving account data of a particular account for
19 which said consumer-selected vendor name is associated
20 with said vendor computer;

21 a second database of information related to a plurality of
22 vendor products, said vendor product information
23 including at least a price and inventory information
24 related to each vendor product;

25 wherein said vendor computer is electronically connected to
26 said second database;

27 means electrically connected to said vendor computer for
28 reading said account data stored on said respective
29 portable coupon card; and
30 means electrically connected to said vendor computer for
31 identifying a particular vendor product selected by a
32 consumer for purchase, said vendor computer adapted to
33 modify said inventory information in said second
34 database based on a sale of said particular product and
35 to calculate a final purchase price of said particular
36 product based on said account data read from said
37 respective portable coupon card.

1 9. The coupon processing system as in claim 8 wherein
2 said vendor computer is adapted to transmit coupons redeemed
3 electronically by consumers to said host computer utilizing
4 said computer network for redemption thereof with the issuer of
5 said coupons.

1 10. The coupon processing system as in claim 8 wherein
2 said host computer is adapted to receive a request from a
3 remote computer connected to the computer network for
4 establishing a new coupon card account in said first database,
5 said host computer adapted to transmit signals for eliciting
6 predetermined demographic information from a new user at said
7 remote computer and prompting said new user to choose a new
8 plurality of consumer-selected coupons from a library of on-

9 line coupons, said host computer adapted to assign a new
10 personal identification number to a new record and store said
11 demographic data and new plurality of consumer-selected coupons
12 in said new record in said first database.

1 11. The coupon processing system as in claim 8 wherein
2 said vendor computer is adapted to retrieve a respective price
3 from said second database associated with a particular product
4 identified by said identifying means and to reduce said
5 respective price by an amount equal to a respective coupon
6 identified by said reading means if a respective redemption
7 number is greater than zero and said expiration date is later
8 than a present date.

1 12. The coupon processing system as in claim 11 wherein
2 said vendor computer is adapted to reduce said respective
3 redemption number by one if said respective coupon is redeemed.

1 13. The coupon processing system as in claim 8 wherein
2 said identifying means is a bar code reader.

1 14. A transaction instrument, comprising:

2 a generally rectangular card having an alphanumeric
3 identification code imprinted on a first side thereof
4 and a plurality of product identifiers imprinted on
5 said first side, said plurality of product identifiers
6 representing a plurality of consumer-selected coupons;
7 and

8 a magnetic strip on a second side of said card, said
9 magnetic strip adapted to store data representing at
10 least said plurality of consumer-selected coupons and
11 said personal identification number.

1 15. A transaction instrument as in claim 14 wherein

2 each product identifier includes a name of a respective
3 company, a respective product or brand name, and a quantity
4 indicator if more than one quantity is offered by said company.

1 16. A transaction instrument as in claim 14 wherein

2 said strip is adapted to store data representing an expiration
3 date for redemption of said consumer-selected coupons, a
4 plurality of redemption numbers representing the number of
5 times respective coupons may be redeemed prior to said
6 expiration date, and a consumer-selected vendor name.

1 17. The transaction instrument as in claim 14 wherein
2 said card is dispensed by an ATM machine upon pre-payment of a
3 monetary amount based on a value of said consumer-selected
4 coupons.